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FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1359

INFO RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

RHMFSS/CJTF HOA IMMEDIATE

RUEKDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

RHMFSS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL IMMEDIATE

RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ADDIS ABABA 001780

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/25/2016

TAGS: PREL KPKO IGAD AU SO SU

SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA: A/S FRAZER DISCUSSES SOMALIA AND SUDAN
WITH FM SEYOUN

Classified By: A/S FRAZER FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: A/S Frazer discussed Somalia and Sudan with FM Seyoum June 24. Seyoum urged a stronger U.S. role in Somalia. If not leading, he said, the U.S. should at least be an active participant in a partners group. A radical change of U.S. attitude will be required, he said. Seyoum said the recent statement of the International Somalia Contact Group had already sent a strong message of support for the Somalia Transitional Federal Government (TFG). The Foreign Minister said that Ethiopia hoped to avoid participating in the initial deployment of an IGAD peace support mission, but believed it was vital to check the advance of the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC). Such a mission should be on the ground as soon as possible with a mandate to protect and build the capacity of the TFG, beginning in Baidoa but looking to expand into areas like Puntland and elsewhere outside Mogadishu. Delay would favor extremists and could cause defection from the Transitional Parliament. Seyoum claimed that "everyone agrees that regional intervention is required; the questions are how, when and by whom." While the UIC had tried to sound moderate, several of its key leaders were not. Seyoum told Frazer that the TFG/UIC dialogue begun in Khartoum earlier in the week would be helpful in isolating extremists. Frazer agreed on the need to develop contingency plans to prevent the consolidation of a radical Islamic regime while avoiding steps that would play into their hands. The key was to create space for more moderate elements. She said that the Khartoum agreement between the UIC and TFG had created the possibility for a political solution. Turning over known terrorists to the USG would send a positive signal, she added, and asked the GOE to convey that message to friendly clan leaders. On Sudan, Seyoum agreed with A/S Frazer that the African Union could not reverse its decision to transfer its mission in Darfur to UN control in spite of Sudan's renewed opposition. He suggested dealing with specific Sudanese concern, such as the specific mandate of the mission and the pursuit of war criminals. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) A/S Frazer called on Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfin June 24. Charge, CJTF-HOA Commander RADM Hunt, Lt. Commander Mike Sowa, Pol/Econ Counselor, executive assistant Kendra Gaither and Somalia/Djibouti deskoff Nole Garey accompanied Frazer. Seyoum was joined by Ethiopian Ambassador to the TFG Abduraziz Akumel, MFA Director for Europe and America Almaz Eshete, Americas Deputy Ayalew Mamo and Ayele Lire of the MFA Africa division.

STRONGER US ROLE NEEDED

¶13. (C) Seyoum urged a stronger U.S. role in Somalia. He recalled that A/S Frazer had mentioned on the margins of the UN General Assembly in fall 2005 that U.S. policy on Somalia was evolving. He commented that while the USG had assisted significantly on the humanitarian front since then, it had remained "on the fence" politically. The intervention of international extremists had now changed the situation dramatically. If not leading political efforts, he said, the U.S. should at least be an active participant in a partners group. He argued that Somalia was at a crossroads; the international community could either "hand the country over to extremists and bleed the whole region" or "take it back for the moderates." There was no time to lose. A radical change of U.S. attitude would be required, he said. Seyoum noted the recent statement of the International Somalia Contact Group (SCG) had already sent a strong message of support for the Somalia Transitional Federal Government (TFG).

¶14. (C) A/S Frazer argued that prior to recent developments, U.S. policy had been to "push from behind." She acknowledged that current dynamics required more and said that her trip to the region was a way to begin. "We still don't want to be in the lead, but will have a stronger presence," she told Seyoum, and promised to send representatives to the June 28-29 AU/IGAD/Partners meeting in Nairobi. Frazer said that the Arab League-brokered agreement between the TFG and the UIC had created the possibility of a political solution. The USG approach was now to 1) support the TFG; 2) support the Somali people and their humanitarian needs; 3) counter the

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terrorist threat; and 4) build indigenous institutions to fill the governance vacuum. She explained to Seyoum the genesis and evolution of the SCG and indicated that SCG agreed to include both IGAD and the Arab League in the next SCG meeting in Stockholm.

¶15. (C) Seyoum claimed that while the UIC had tried to sound moderate, several of its key leaders were not. Recent contradictory public statements from the UIC clearly reflected this. He suggested that the Khartoum agreement with the TFG had merely been a way for the UIC to stall for time in order to consolidate its gains on the way to creating a radical Islamic state in Somalia. "We must monitor developments closely and prepare ourselves to neutralize this threat," he said. "Our best entry point is to continue supporting the TFG. Fighting terrorism cannot be separated from the struggle to establish the rule of law."

REGIONAL MISSION TO PROTECT AND BOLSTER TFG

¶16. (C) Seyoum claimed that "everyone agrees that regional intervention is required; the questions are how, when and by whom." The short-term solution would be the deployment of an African force in Somalia to check the advance of extremists. The longer-term effort should be focused on building the institutions of a national police force and army that reflected the country's clan make up. The Foreign Minister said that Ethiopia hoped to avoid participating in the initial deployment of an IGAD peace support mission (IGASOM), since the UIC would seek to exploit popular suspicions of Ethiopia. Ethiopia would go into Somalia only as a last resort if no other option appeared viable.

¶17. (C) Seyoum said that a regional mission should be deployed with a mandate to protect the TFG, beginning in Baidoa but looking to expand into areas like Puntland and elsewhere outside Mogadishu. Such a mission should be deployed immediately, regardless of the UIC's rejection and

criticisms. Delay would favor extremists and could cause defection from the Transitional Parliament. The UIC itself was a diverse mixture of forces, including both moderate militias tied to clan leaders and businessmen as well as extreme elements, such as Aden Hashi Ayro. These disparate elements had no other cause to unite them other than opposing the TFG, which they accused of having no indigenous support.

¶18. (C) A/S Frazer said the USG and international partners needed to see the TFG's National Security and Stabilization Plan before making decisions about supporting and IGAD mission in Somalia. She expressed concern that deployment of the mission could have the opposite affect of that desired -- rallying Somalis against the TFG. It would be important to plan for all contingencies, since the UIC might indeed prove to be radical and aggressive. In order to minimize the risk of a negative popular reaction in Somalia, Frazer urged that, at least initially, the focus of an IGAD mission be building the capacity of the TFG, rather than simply protecting it or fighting the UIC. The USG and other partners were still hesitant about deploying an IGASOM mission, and about lifting the arms embargo; framing the issue properly would be critical. Seyoum agreed, saying that any IGASOM mission that did not build the TFG's long-term capacity would fail. He claimed that the existing NSSP was already a step in this direction, since it gave all the clans a role in security and other institutions. He noted that the TFG already had a 3,000-man militia. A/S Frazer replied that the existing TFG militia must be broadened so that it would not be perceived merely as "Yusuf's militia."

DIALOGUE TO ISOLATE THE EXTREMISTS, CREATE SPACE FOR MODERATES

¶19. (C) Frazer agreed on the need to develop contingency plans to prevent the consolidation of a radical Islamic regime while avoiding steps that would play into their hands. The key was to create space for more moderate elements. The next round of Arab League-sponsored talks would take place July ¶15. Frazer agreed that extremists might use the lapse and a false sense of security among the international community to consolidate their position and prepare another offensive. She asked Seyoum what steps he would recommend in the interim

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to counter UIC hard-liners. The Foreign Minister replied that "only committed intervention of the international community will tip the balance in favor of the TFG," and argued that it was possible to influence the situation. Seyoum told Frazer that the TFG/UIC dialogue begun in Khartoum earlier in the week would be helpful in isolating extremists. He said that leaders from the 'Ayr clan had already contacted the GOE to convey misgivings about extremist activities of UIC leaders. The killing of a Swedish journalist had created an uproar that would redound against radical leaders.

¶10. (C) Frazer emphasized that turning over known terrorists to the USG would send a positive signal and asked the GOE to convey that message to friendly clan leaders. The more important issue was clearly to prevent Somalia from becoming a Jihadist state, but in the short-term a hand-over of wanted terrorists would foster positive U.S. engagement. Seyoum replied that "they always deny that they have them," but agreed to pass the message. He noted that the 'Ayr clan had seized the properties of other clans in southern Mogadishu fifteen years earlier and had been profiting from them. Clan leaders were concerned that a functioning national government would force them to return the properties and were looking for a way to avoid this. Finding a way to solve this problem would facilitate stability in Mogadishu and bring various clan leaders into cooperation with the TFG and international partners. A/S Frazer responded that the Contact Group might explore possible solutions.

¶11. (C) On Sudan, A/S Frazer argued strongly that the African Union could not reverse its decision to transfer its mission in Darfur to UN control in spite of Sudan's renewed opposition. The GOS was simply stalling, she asserted, and would back down in the face of a firm position on the part of the AU. Recent statements by President Al Bashir were an effort to create chaos in the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC). The A/S added that if the AU were to reverse itself on the UN transition, the DPA itself could fall apart. Frazer asked that Ethiopia use its influence within other African states to maintain the current AU commitment to an October transition from AMIS to a UN mission in Darfur.

¶12. (C) Seyoum agreed that "the implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) was not optional. Furthermore, the GOE clearly understood what the PSC had decided at the last AU Summit. There was no doubt about the mission transition at the end of September, and there would be no going back. Seyoum said that the GOE had already sent the GOS a message to this effect. He suggested that an alternative to giving in on the UN re-hatting was to deal with specific Sudanese concern, such as the specific mandate of the mission and the pursuit of war criminals. He urged the USG to continue intensive bilateral diplomacy to ensure continued member state commitment to the PSC decision. A/S Frazer agreed, and said that working on specific language within a Chapter 6 mandate to protect civilians and the UN Mission itself was a viable option.

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